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It is not often that groups of 18-year-olds want to risk their lives for the greater good of the country.

That was the case for three aspiring Lake County young men who will soon be attending military academies in preparation to serve as the nation's next leaders.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, announced the 2008 10th Congressional District military academy appointees at a breakfast Saturday at his Northbrook office.

"I can't wait for this opportunity," said Highland Park resident Thomas Allman, who will be attending West Point in the fall. "I can't wait to put the Army uniform on."

Allman, 18, who just graduated from Highland Park High School a few weeks ago, said he wanted to be a part of the military due in large part to his desire to be a leader.

"Being a leader in the military is something that I've always wanted to do since I was a kid," Allman said, whose grandparents shared stories about their days in the Army. "I believe I have the ability to do it."

Each year, members of Congress submit nominations of students from their districts for admission to one of the five service academies.

The county applicants will be appointed to the Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The nominees were selected by Kirk's Service Academy Selection Committee, which is used for the nominating process. The nonpartisan panel meets annually each December to review all the

applicants.

Each student entering a service academy receives formal military training, a bachelor's degree and an officer's commission.

Abraham Bailin will certainly be looking forward to the opportunity to leave the nest when he heads to West Point Academy in few months.

The University of Kansas freshman said he cannot wait to ditch the laid-back lifestyle of Lawrence, Kan. and head to the rugged environment that only a military college can offer.

Bailin, 18, plans to major in international studies and economics to help him better understand the world's problems and figure out ways to solve them.

"Don't get me wrong, I loved all the people at Kansas, but I want to be in a place where I could mold myself into a leader and improve as a person," the Deerfield resident said. "I know by going to West Point I will be able to reach my full potential."

Karl Mohrmann, 18, of Lake Bluff has come from a long line of family members who have joined the military, and looks to continue that tradition when he steps foot on the Air Force Academy campus this fall.

The former Boy Scout, whose father and grandparents spent time in the military, said there is nothing more he would like to do than make his family proud.

"I have never been away from my family that much," Mohrmann said, who will have to endure six weeks of boot camp that will include no phone or e-mail privileges. "That's going to be the tough part for me to deal with first -- not being able to call my family. It will take me a few weeks to adjust to that, but I have to do it if I want to represent my country."